

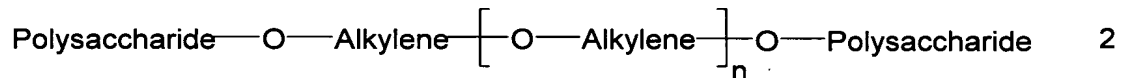
Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 3 (canceled)

4. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide, said cross-linked polysaccharide being a polysaccharide cross-linked by a backbone chain of atoms, ~~an ether linkage consisting of~~ said backbone chain of atoms having the formula 2



wherein each Alkylene consists of one or more -CH₂- groups, ~~wherein the two terminal oxygen atoms are ether oxygen atoms,~~ and wherein n is an integer of ranging from 1 to 100.

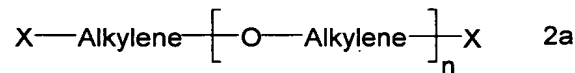
5. (Original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
6. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4, wherein each Alkylene ~~consists of~~ comprises from 1 to 5 -CH₂- groups.
7. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 6 wherein said each alkylene is a -CH₂-CH₂- group.
8. (Original) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 7 wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
9. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4, wherein said backbone chain of atoms is a group of formula -O-CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-O- Polysaccharide-O-CH₂-CH₂-O- CH₂-CH₂-O-Polysaccharide.

Claims 10-65 (canceled).

66. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4, wherein the polysaccharide is
- a starch selected from the group consisting of starches derived from corn, wheat, rice, potato, tapioca, waxy maize, sorghum, sago and waxy sorghum;[:]
 - a modified starch selected from the group consisting of dextrinated, hydrolysed, oxidized, alkylated, hydroxyalkylated, acetylated and fractionated starches;[:]
 - a member selected from the group consisting of cellulose, dextrans, polygalactomannans, ionic and/or non ionic derivatized, ~~ehitin/chitosan~~, chitin, chitosan, ~~alginate compositions~~, alginates, gums, xanthan gum, carageenan gum, ~~gum~~ karaya gum, ~~gum~~ arabic gum, pectin and glass-like polysaccharides; or
 - a member selected from the group consisting of an anionic and a cationic polysaccharide[s].
67. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 66 wherein the anionic polysaccharides are substituted with anionic groups selected from the group consisting of ~~polysaccharides having groups selected from the group consisting of~~ dicarboxylate and tricarboxylate groups.
68. (Currently amended) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 66 wherein the anionic polysaccharides are substituted with anionic groups selected from the group consisting of ~~polysaccharides having groups selected from the group consisting of~~ iminodiacetate groups and citrate groups.
69. (Currently amended) A mixture for use in a food pad; in sanitary napkins; in diapers; in incontinence products; in agricultural and forestry applications to retain water in soil and to release water to the roots of plants; in fire-fighting techniques; bandages and surgical pads; for cleanup of acidic or basic aqueous solutions spills, including water soluble chemicals spills and; as polymeric gels for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals also known as drug delivery systems and slow release substances; and for artificial snow, said mixture comprising an

~~effective amount of a~~ cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4 4 and one or more other known absorbents.

70. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 66, wherein said anionic polysaccharide is an anionic starch.
71. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 70, wherein said anionic starch is a carboxyalkyl starch, wherein the alkyl comprises from 1 to 3 carbon atoms.
72. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 71, wherein said carboxyalkyl starch is a carboxymethyl starch.
73. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 66, wherein said starch is a starch half ester selected from the group consisting of starch maleate half ester, starch succinate half ester, starch sulfosuccinate half ester, starch citraconate half ester, starch glutarate half ester and starch phthalate half ester.
74. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 4, wherein said cross-linked polysaccharide is obtained by reacting a polysaccharide with an activated polyalkylene glycol having the formula 2a below:



wherein each alkylene consists of one or more -CH₂- groups, wherein n is an integer ranging from 1 to 100, and wherein X is selected from the group consisting of halogen, mesylate, tosylate and triflate.

75. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 74, wherein said halogen is selected from the group consisting of chloride, bromide and iodide.
76. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 75, wherein said halogen is chloride.
77. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 76, wherein said alkylene comprises from 1 to 5 -CH₂- groups.
78. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 77, wherein said alkylene is an ethylene group.

79. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 78, wherein n is 1, 2 or 3.
80. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 74, wherein said activated polyalkylene glycol has an average molecular weight of 10,000 or less.
81. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 80, wherein said activated polyalkylene glycol has an average molecular weight of 300 or less.
82. (New) A cross-linked polysaccharide as defined in claim 74, wherein said activated polyalkylene glycol is selected from the group consisting of 1,5-dichloro-3-oxopentane, 1,8-dichloro-3,6-dioxooctane and 1,11-dichloro-3,6,9-trioxoundecane.